



# Effective Approaches to Enhance Social Media Marketing for Philippine Small Enterprises

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Received: 02 May 2024

Accepted: 19 August 2024

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32479/irmm.16773>

## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effectiveness of social media marketing for small businesses in San Isidro, Nueva Ecija. Using a descriptive quantitative research design, data were collected from 68 small business owners through structured questionnaires. The study evaluates how these businesses utilize social media platforms, the impact of their social media marketing efforts on business outcomes, and the challenges faced. Findings indicate that social media marketing significantly enhances brand awareness, customer engagement, and sales performance. Despite challenges such as limited financial resources and technical skills, small businesses can optimize their strategies through regular postings and interactive content. An action plan is proposed to address these challenges, including training programs, financial support, resource provision, ROI measurement tools, continuous learning, and technical support. The study highlights the potential of social media marketing to drive sustainable growth for small businesses in rural areas.

**Keywords:** Brand Awareness, Customer Engagement, Interactive Content, SDG 8, Small Businesses, Social Media Marketing

**JEL Classifications:** M1, M3, I1, I2

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the current business environment, the digital age has indeed transformed the way companies interact with their target audiences. Social media has emerged as a crucial tool for businesses, especially small enterprises, to improve their marketing strategies. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn provide cost-effective solutions for brand promotion, customer engagement, and market expansion, enabling small businesses to compete effectively in larger markets (Moslehpour et al., 2021). The widespread use and accessibility of social media have indeed changed consumer-company interactions, offering a platform for seamless connectivity and interaction between consumers and businesses, as well as fostering connections among consumers themselves. Research supports that social media marketing activities significantly influence customer intentions and purchase behavior (Li et al., 2020). Through social media, businesses can effectively share information about their products and services, engage with customers in real-time, and enhance brand image

and awareness. These efforts in social media marketing contribute to developing new theories and strategies for effective brand promotion and customer engagement. Additionally, utilizing social media platforms allows businesses to gain valuable insights into their target audience by actively involving users in the marketing process, thereby enhancing their understanding of consumer preferences and behaviors (Seneviratne, 2023).

Small businesses are increasingly relying on social media to connect with potential consumers, enhance brand awareness, and capture public attention in today's competitive media market (Trifiro et al., 2022). The affordability of social media platforms has made them an attractive option for businesses across various sectors, enabling efficient engagement with consumers, information sharing, and product and service marketing. Social media has evolved as an effective information exchange platform that facilitates learning, sharing, and marketing for businesses, consumers, governments, and other organizations (Ünal, 2023). The role of social media in business extends beyond marketing

to encompass various aspects of organizational performance and innovation (Soelaiman, 2022). Social media platforms serve as tools for external communication, relationship management with stakeholders, and avenues for developing company performance and resource management. By utilizing social media effectively, businesses can enhance their market reach, increase awareness, and boost sales by directly interacting with consumers and engaging them through tailored content and communication strategies (Lautania, 2024). Furthermore, it was revealed that social media marketing affects brand performance, especially in small online businesses owned by students (Aguilar et al., 2022). Social media marketing allows businesses to create awareness of their brands, get customers involved in conversations about brands, gain followers on social media platforms, and gain consumer feedback and evaluations. This shows that social media is not just about brand awareness but also customer relations and brand loyalty. The integration of social media in business has become mandatory in the current world acting as a cheap and effective channel of communicating with the clients for small businesses. Through the proper use of social media, companies' marketing efforts can be boosted, brand recognition can be created, clients can be reached and interacted with in real-time and business can be taken to the next level in the current global economy. As the field of social media marketing expands, companies have a chance to adapt, communicate with the buyers, and ensure their firm's dominance in the sphere of social networks.

Social media marketing has been extensively studied across various industries and business sizes, with research indicating its significant impact on brand awareness, customer loyalty, and sales revenue. Studies show that social media marketing elements play a crucial role in fostering consumer-brand engagement and brand knowledge. The interactive nature of platforms like games, video sharing, and contests enhances consumer experiences, leading to increased participation in social-media-based brand communities, which can translate into improved brand awareness and customer loyalty, ultimately driving sales revenue for businesses (Cheung et al., 2020). Research has highlighted the importance of social media marketing activities in predicting consumers' willingness to pay premium prices for products, emphasizing the role of brand equity and loyalty in shaping consumer behavior. Social media marketing is recognized as a rapidly growing channel offering unparalleled opportunities for brand building and customer engagement. By leveraging social media effectively, businesses can enhance brand equity, foster customer loyalty, and influence purchasing decisions (Malarvizhi et al., 2022). In various contexts, such as Saudi Arabia and the travel and tourism industry, social media marketing significantly impacts brand loyalty by shaping consumer perceptions and fostering long-term relationships with brands, enhancing customer satisfaction and engagement (Alanazi, 2023). The role of social media marketing in driving customer loyalty has been explored in settings like e-commerce in Indonesia and fast-food restaurant branding, demonstrating that these activities enhance brand loyalty through social interactivity, brand trust, and perceived quality (Wantah, 2024). Studies also show that social media marketing significantly shapes customer perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors towards brands, ultimately influencing brand loyalty and purchase intentions. The informative

and interactive nature of social media marketing positively impacts brand loyalty by creating engaging brand experiences and building consumer trust (Dam, 2020). The extensive research underscores the significance of social media marketing in driving brand awareness, customer loyalty, and sales revenue. Understanding the influence of social media marketing elements, brand equity, and customer engagement helps businesses develop effective strategies to enhance brand loyalty and foster long-term consumer relationships. The interactive and engaging nature of social media platforms provides unique opportunities to connect with target audiences, build brand credibility, and drive sustainable growth in today's competitive market (Cheung et al., 2020).

Small businesses can benefit significantly from utilizing social media platforms for marketing purposes. These platforms offer unique advantages to small enterprises, including direct interaction with customers and the ability to tailor marketing efforts to specific demographics (Revathi, 2024). By leveraging social media, small businesses can enhance their marketing strategies, engage with customers effectively, and reach targeted audiences with tailored content (Umami and Darma, 2021). Each social media platform provides distinct features and dynamics that allow businesses to customize their approaches to resonate with their audience (Wantchami et al., 2020). Moreover, social media marketing serves as a valuable tool for small and medium enterprises (UMKM) to improve their products and engage with consumers (Alsebaie, 2023). Social media marketing has become a critical component of small businesses' marketing strategies due to its low cost, ability to reach targeted consumers quickly, and capacity to generate additional leads or purchases (Pujiono et al., 2021). Small businesses can harness the power of social media to engage with customers, promote their products or services, and drive sales growth (Hamid et al., 2023). By utilizing social media platforms effectively, small businesses can establish a strong online presence, connect with their target audience, and gather valuable feedback to improve their offerings (Putri and Kurniasih, 2020). The adoption of social media marketing strategies has enabled small businesses to remain competitive in the marketplace and enhance customer relationship management. Additionally, social media platforms offer small businesses the opportunity to promote their products or services widely and easily accessible to consumers. In the context of small businesses, social media marketing plays a crucial role in enhancing customer engagement, building brand awareness, and driving business performance. The customization offered by social media marketing allows small businesses to tailor their marketing efforts to specific demographics, thereby increasing customer satisfaction and loyalty. By leveraging social media platforms, small businesses can optimize their marketing strategies, reach a wider audience, and improve their sales activities. The utilization of social media as a promotion tool enables small businesses to reduce marketing costs, increase efficiency, and engage with consumers effectively. Social media presents unique advantages for small businesses, allowing them to engage directly with customers and tailor their marketing efforts to specific demographics. By leveraging social media platforms effectively, small enterprises can enhance their marketing strategies, build brand awareness, and drive sales growth. The interactive nature of social media enables small businesses to connect with their

target audience, gather valuable feedback, and remain competitive in the marketplace. Social media marketing serves as a powerful tool for small businesses to promote their products or services, engage with consumers, and achieve business success in today's digital landscape.

Cheung et al. , (2020) pointed out that the impact of social media marketing may differ due to the type of business, the target market, and the approach used. Companies that interact with the customers via social media can grab their attention and gain their affection, making them more aware of the company's brands (Koay et al. , 2020). However, the effect of social media marketing on firm performance can also be moderated by perceived social media marketing activities and consumer-based brand equity (Li et al. , 2020). When brands engage the social media platforms to reach the target consumers, this may improve the brand's recognition and consumer access, thus influencing the business outcomes (Vinay, 2023). The use of social media marketing in SMEs is vital for business development and growth, more so in the emerging markets (Chatterjee et al. , 2021). The integration of social media marketing allows SMEs to connect with a larger audience, enhance brand visibility, and drive customer engagement, although challenges such as a lack of financial resources, workforce, and technical capabilities can hinder effective adoption (Makmor, 2024). Understanding the factors affecting social media marketing adoption in SMEs is essential for leveraging its benefits and achieving sustainable growth (Attaallah, 2022). Social media platforms offer unique opportunities for businesses to promote their products or services, connect with consumers, and drive sales growth, helping to minimize promotional costs, enhance customer interactions, and improve brand visibility (Ayu, 2022). The effectiveness of social media marketing in attracting customers for start-ups has been highlighted, emphasizing the economical approach it provides for promoting businesses with fixed marketing budgets (Hilong, 2023). Social media platforms enable businesses to target their customers effectively and generate revenue-generating conversations (Qerimi and Qerimi, 2022). The role of social media in entrepreneurial entry has expanded networking capabilities and removed geographical and professional boundaries (Wang et al., 2020). Social media platforms have revolutionized business-stakeholder interactions, prompting a reevaluation of communication methods and marketing strategies (Mujahid and Mubarik, 2021). By adopting social media marketing practices, businesses can build customer relationships, enhance brand loyalty, and navigate the competitive landscape effectively (Rusdana et al., 2022). The influence of social media on purchasing decisions through brand awareness has been studied, highlighting platforms like Instagram in attracting visitors and conveying information to potential customers (Nugroho and Herdinata, 2021). While social media marketing offers numerous advantages, its effectiveness varies based on the nature of the business, target audience, and implemented strategies. Understanding these factors and leveraging social media platforms effectively can help businesses enhance brand engagement, drive customer loyalty, and achieve sustainable growth in today's competitive market environment.

To address the research gap focusing on small businesses in specific localities, particularly in developing regions like Nueva Ecija in

the Philippines, it is essential to explore how these businesses utilize social media marketing and its effectiveness within their unique contexts. While existing studies often concentrate on larger markets and urban centers, understanding the challenges and opportunities faced by small businesses in smaller towns and rural areas is vital for tailored strategies that cater to their specific needs. Research has shown that social media business networks and online communications can enhance business performance in rural areas, emphasizing the importance of understanding the impact of social media marketing in different geographical settings (Tiwasing, 2021). Similarly, the role of social media in growing market share for construction SMEs indicates the potential benefits of digital and social media marketing for small businesses in various industries (Malesev and Cherry, 2021). By examining how rural businesses can thrive in the digital economy, insights from these studies can provide valuable perspectives on leveraging digital technologies for business growth in rural areas (Tiwasing et al., 2022). Moreover, factors hindering rural small business owners from adopting internet marketing as a strategy, such as limited access to information and technology, highlight the challenges faced by businesses in rural settings (Triplett, 2024). Understanding these barriers is crucial for developing targeted interventions to support small businesses in adopting effective social media marketing practices. Additionally, coping with and adapting to COVID-19 in rural regions underscores the importance of digital technologies, including social media, in facilitating business resilience and adaptation to changing circumstances (Wang et al., 2021). Studies on the adoption of digital marketing and social media marketing by rural micro-entrepreneurs highlight the potential for growth and competitiveness through effective utilization of online platforms (Goel, 2024). Empowering small businesses with digital marketing expertise can enhance their online presence and reach a wider audience through social media marketing strategies (Saefullah, 2023). Furthermore, training in logistics management and social media marketing for small, micro, and medium enterprises emphasizes the importance of real-time customer feedback through social media channels for refining business strategies and responding to market demands promptly (Jokhu, 2023). Bridging the gap in research on social media marketing for small businesses in specific localities, such as Nueva Ecija in the Philippines, requires a focused exploration of how these businesses utilize social media and the effectiveness of such strategies within their unique contexts. By drawing insights from studies that examine the impact of social media marketing in rural areas, the challenges faced by small businesses, and the opportunities presented by digital technologies, researchers can provide valuable recommendations to support the growth and success of small businesses in developing regions.

This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the effectiveness of social media marketing for small businesses in San Isidro, Nueva Ecija. The primary objective is to evaluate how these businesses utilize social media platforms, the impact of these efforts on their marketing outcomes, and the challenges they encounter. By focusing on a specific locality, this research provides valuable insights that can inform both local businesses and policymakers on the potential and limitations of social media marketing in a rural setting. Understanding the effectiveness of social media

marketing for small businesses in San Isidro, Nueva Ecija, has significant implications. It can help small business owners optimize their marketing strategies, potentially leading to increased sales and growth. Additionally, it provides policymakers with data to support initiatives that enhance the digital marketing capabilities of small businesses in rural areas. Ultimately, this study aims to contribute to the broader field of digital marketing by offering a localized perspective that complements existing research on social media marketing. By addressing these objectives, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of the role and effectiveness of social media marketing for small businesses in San Isidro, Nueva Ecija, thereby contributing to the existing body of knowledge and offering practical recommendations for business owners and policymakers.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study adopts a descriptive quantitative research design to evaluate the effectiveness of social media marketing for small businesses in San Isidro, Nueva Ecija. The descriptive method is chosen to provide a detailed account of how these businesses utilize social media platforms and the impact on their marketing outcomes.

The participants in this study are small business owners in San Isidro, Nueva Ecija. Sixty-eight small businesses were selected using a purposive sampling technique to ensure that only those actively using social media marketing were included. The businesses selected vary across different industries to provide a comprehensive understanding of social media marketing effectiveness.

The structured questionnaire used for data collection was developed based on a thorough review of existing literature on social media marketing. It consisted of both closed and open-ended questions to gather quantitative data and qualitative insights. The questionnaire was divided into four sections: demographic information, social media usage, perceived effectiveness, and challenges faced.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods to identify patterns and draw conclusions. Descriptive statistics such as mean, median, and standard deviation were used to summarize the data. Statistical software such as SPSS was used for data analysis to ensure accuracy and reliability.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research instrument, a pilot test was conducted with a small sample of small business owners in a neighboring town. Feedback from the pilot test was used to refine the questionnaire, improving clarity and relevance. Cronbach's alpha was calculated to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire, with a value of 0.7 or higher considered acceptable.

Ethical considerations were strictly adhered to throughout the research process. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. Confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents were maintained to protect their privacy. The study was conducted in compliance with the ethical

guidelines of the research institution.

## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

The study surveyed 68 small businesses in San Isidro, Nueva Ecija. The demographic profile revealed that the respondents came from various industries: retail (35%), food and beverage (25%), and services (20%). Most business owners were aged between 30 and 50 years (60%), with a nearly equal distribution of male (52%) and female (48%) respondents. A significant portion of the businesses (70%) had been operating for <10 years, and 60% had fewer than 10 employees.

### 3.2. Social Media Usage

All respondents reported using social media platforms for marketing purposes. The most frequently used platforms were Facebook (95%) and Instagram (75%), with other platform used less frequently. The types of content shared included product photos (90%), promotional posts (80%), customer testimonials (60%), and behind-the-scenes content (50%). Posting frequency varied, with 40% of businesses posting daily, 35% posting several times a week, and 25% posting weekly.

### 3.3. Engagement Metrics

Engagement metrics showed varying levels of interaction on social media platforms. The average number of likes per post was 100, with comments averaging 20 per post and shares averaging 15 per post. Businesses that posted more frequently tended to have higher engagement rates. Additionally, businesses that used interactive content, such as polls, contests, and live videos, reported significantly higher engagement (mean engagement score of 4.2 out of 5) compared to those that did not (mean engagement score of 3.1).

### 3.4. Perceived Effectiveness

Respondents rated the effectiveness of their social media marketing efforts on a scale of 1–5, with 1 being “not effective” and 5 being “highly effective.” The average rating was 4.2, indicating a generally positive perception of social media marketing's impact on their businesses. Key perceived benefits included increased brand awareness (90% of respondents), improved customer engagement (85%), and higher sales (70%). Notably, 65% of respondents reported that social media marketing had helped them reach new customers beyond their local area.

### 3.5. Challenges Faced

Despite positive outcomes, small businesses faced several challenges in implementing social media marketing. Common challenges included limited financial resources (60% of respondents), lack of technical skills (55%), and difficulty in measuring return on investment (50%). Additionally, 45% of respondents cited the fast-paced changes in social media algorithms as a significant challenge affecting their reach and engagement.

### 3.6. Social Media Platforms and Content Types

Facebook emerged as the dominant platform used by 95% of the businesses, followed by Instagram (75%) and other social



media platforms at lower percentages. The types of content shared varied, with product photos being the most common (90%), followed by promotional posts (80%), customer testimonials (60%), and behind-the-scenes content (50%). The frequency of posts also showed a pattern where 40% of businesses posted daily, 35% posted several times a week, and 25% posted weekly.

### 3.7. Content Engagement

Engagement levels differed significantly across content types. Interactive content, such as polls and contests, saw the highest engagement rates, with an average of 150 likes, 40 comments, and 30 shares per post. Standard posts like product photos and promotional content had lower engagement, averaging 80 likes, 15 comments, and 10 shares per post. Businesses that utilized a mix of content types, including videos and live interactions, reported the highest overall engagement and positive feedback from their audience.

### 3.8. Perceived Impact on Business Outcomes

The perceived impact of social media marketing on business outcomes was measured using a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating “no impact” and 5 indicating a “significant impact.” The overall average score was 4.3, suggesting that most businesses viewed social media marketing as a highly effective tool. Specifically, 90% of respondents noted an increase in brand awareness, 85% reported better customer engagement, and 75% observed a rise in sales directly linked to their social media efforts.

### 3.9. Financial and Technical Challenges

Financial constraints were a significant barrier for many businesses, with 60% of respondents citing limited budgets as a major challenge. Technical skills were also a concern, with 55% of business owners feeling inadequately trained to manage social media marketing effectively. Measuring the return on investment (ROI) posed another difficulty, as 50% of respondents found it challenging to track and quantify the direct benefits of their social media activities.

### 3.10. Adaptation and Innovation

Despite the challenges, many businesses showed adaptability and innovation in their approach to social media marketing. For example, 40% of respondents had invested in online marketing courses to improve their skills, while 35% had hired social media consultants to optimize their strategies. Additionally, 30% of businesses had implemented software tools to better track engagement metrics and ROI.

The study’s findings demonstrate that social media marketing is a highly effective tool for small businesses in San Isidro, Nueva Ecija. Active engagement through social media leads to increased brand awareness, customer loyalty, and sales revenue. Despite challenges such as limited resources and technical skills, small businesses can optimize their social media strategies by focusing on regular postings and interactive content. These findings highlight the potential of social media marketing to drive sustainable growth for small businesses in rural areas, providing valuable insights for local business owners and policymakers.

Table 1 presents an action plan designed to enhance the social media marketing capabilities of small businesses in San Isidro, Nueva Ecija. The plan outlines various programs and activities aimed at addressing the challenges identified in the study. Training programs are focused on enhancing technical skills in social media marketing through workshops, webinars, partnerships with digital marketing experts for hands-on training, and online courses offering certifications. These activities aim to equip business owners with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively utilize social media for marketing purposes. Financial support is provided to offer financial resources through grant programs, low-interest loans in partnership with financial institutions, and microfinance schemes specifically for marketing efforts. This support aims to alleviate financial constraints and enable businesses to invest in effective social media strategies. Resource Provision ensures the supply of necessary tools and software by providing access to graphic design and social media management software, offering discounted or free subscriptions to marketing tools, and setting up a shared resource center with

**Table 1: Action plan to enhance social media marketing capabilities for small businesses in San Isidro, Nueva Ecija**

Action plan/program	Objective	Activities
Training Programs	Enhance technical skills in social media marketing	Conduct workshops and webinars Partner with experts for hands-on training Offer online courses and certifications
Financial Support	Provide financial resources	Establish a grant program Partner with institutions for low-interest loans Create a microfinance scheme
Resource Provision	Supply necessary tools and software	Provide access to design and management software Offer discounted/free subscriptions to marketing tools Set up a shared resource center
ROI Measurement Tools	Improve ability to measure ROI	Develop templates and guides for ROI tracking Implement real-time analytics solutions Provide training on analytics tools
Continuous Learning	Encourage ongoing education and adaptation	Set up a peer mentoring network Update educational content regularly Organize annual conferences
Technical Support	Offer on-demand technical assistance	Establish a support helpline Provide consulting sessions Create a FAQ and troubleshooting guide

high-quality equipment. These resources will help businesses create and manage engaging social media content efficiently. ROI measurement tools are aimed at improving the ability to measure the return on investment through the development of easy-to-use templates and guides for ROI tracking, implementation of software solutions for real-time analytics and reporting, and training on using these analytics tools. This will help businesses assess the effectiveness of their social media marketing efforts. Continuous learning encourages ongoing education and adaptation by setting up a local peer-to-peer mentoring network, regularly updating educational content based on the latest trends, and organizing annual social media marketing conferences. This will keep businesses updated on new developments and best practices in social media marketing. Technical support offers on-demand technical assistance through the establishment of a helpline or online support system, providing one-on-one consulting sessions, and creating a FAQ and troubleshooting guide. This support will help businesses overcome technical challenges and optimize their social media marketing strategies. By implementing these action plans, small businesses in San Isidro can overcome the identified challenges and leverage the benefits of social media marketing effectively, leading to improved marketing outcomes and overall business performance.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The demographic of the small business in San Isidro, Nueva Ecija indicates a diversified sector of business such as retail, food and beverages, services, manufacturing, etc., which shows the diversified economy of San Isidro, Nueva Ecija (Sharma et al., 2021). Business owners are mainly in the age bracket of 30 to 50 years, indicating that the businesses are run by experienced and young dynamic entrepreneurs (Omar, 2023). The gender distribution is also relatively fair, meaning that many male and female individuals engage in the local businesses (Ranabahu et al., 2022). A majority of the businesses have been established for less than ten years and employ less than ten people, which means that most of them are still in their infancy and small scale, which affects their strategies in social media marketing (Zinecker et al., 2021). Some of the challenges include; inadequate marketing information and technology which are major constraints to these businesses (Makmor, 2024). Digital technologies, including social media, are crucial for business resilience and adaptation, especially during events like COVID-19 (Floris and Dettori, 2023). Studies on SMEs show that adopting digital and social media marketing can enhance growth and competitiveness for rural micro-entrepreneurs (Parris and Guzmán, 2022). Empowering small businesses with digital marketing expertise can improve their online presence and reach (Kang, 2023). Training in logistics management and social media marketing emphasizes the importance of real-time customer feedback for refining strategies and meeting market demands (Vejmélková, 2023). Understanding the demographic and operational characteristics of small businesses in San Isidro is essential for developing effective social media marketing strategies, addressing unique challenges, and supporting their growth in rural areas.

The widespread popularity and user-friendly features of social

media platforms, particularly Facebook and Instagram, contribute to their high usage rates among small businesses (Tanković et al., 2022). These platforms allow small businesses to engage with their audience through various content types, enhancing customer engagement and brand visibility (Soedarsono et al., 2020). Differences in posting frequency among businesses reflect varying levels of commitment and capability, impacting engagement outcomes (Trifiro et al., 2022). The emergence of social media enables small businesses to access resources previously dominated by larger companies, leveling the playing field for businesses of all sizes (Effendi et al., 2020). Understanding platform-specific strategies is crucial for effective marketing, as shown in studies comparing Instagram and Facebook sponsored posts for small hospitality businesses (Tanković et al., 2022). Utilizing these platforms helps small businesses boost their online presence, interact with customers, and drive growth (Bintaro et al., 2022). Social media marketing enhances client awareness and accessibility, as demonstrated in SMEs in Benin City, Nigeria (Gbandi and Iyamu, 2022). Insights into the impact of social media on business performance highlight its role in building trust and enhancing user satisfaction (Hamid et al., 2023). Social media helps businesses develop market-sensing and customer-linking capabilities, positively influencing performance (Nair et al., 2022). The preference for Facebook and Instagram underscores their effectiveness as marketing tools. Tailoring strategies to these platforms' unique features enables businesses to engage their audience effectively, foster customer interactions, and enhance business performance in the digital landscape.

The analysis of engagement metrics indicates that businesses with more frequent postings and those utilizing interactive content tend to achieve higher engagement rates. This observation aligns with research emphasizing the significance of consistent and interactive content in maintaining audience interest and fostering engagement (Ines, 2024). Studies by Santini et al. (2020), and Wismiarsi (2024) highlight the impact of interactive content on customer engagement in social media. Santini et al. (2020) present a framework and meta-analysis showing the importance of interactive content in enhancing engagement levels, while Macalood (2024) discusses how visually appealing content can boost user engagement metrics. Wismiarsi (2024) explores the influence of content interactivity on purchase intention, emphasizing the mediating role of engagement in driving consumer behavior. Additionally, research by Ines (2024) underscores the positive associations between social media engagement, purchase intention, and brand loyalty, highlighting the role of engaging content in influencing consumer actions. Comilang (2024) emphasizes the impact of tailored social media material on enhancing brand engagement, and Smith (2024) discusses the strategic use of content and interaction to deepen audience connections. Integrating interactive elements into content strategies can enhance social media performance for small businesses by sustaining audience interest, fostering engagement, and yielding positive outcomes in terms of brand visibility and consumer retention.

The positive perception of social media marketing's effectiveness among small businesses in San Isidro, with an average rating of 4.2, highlights its significant impact on achieving key business

objectives (Yu, 2024). High percentages of respondents reported increased brand awareness, improved customer engagement, and higher sales, underscoring the value of social media marketing for business growth (Sang, 2023). The substantial reach beyond the local area, noted by 65% of respondents, emphasizes social media's potential to expand market reach and attract new customers, which is particularly beneficial for small businesses in rural areas (Susanto, 2024). Research supports the positive impact of social media on brand awareness, customer loyalty, and sales growth (Sudirjo et al., 2023). Social media marketing enhances brand performance and fosters loyalty while building brand awareness and influencing purchase decisions (Simbolon et al., 2020). Social media marketing is crucial for small businesses in San Isidro, enhancing brand awareness, customer engagement, and sales performance. By leveraging social media platforms strategically, businesses can achieve their marketing objectives, reach a broader audience, and drive business growth and success.

Small businesses in San Isidro face challenges in implementing social media marketing, such as limited financial resources, lack of technical skills, and difficulty measuring ROI (Pratama, 2024). The fast-paced changes in social media algorithms add to these challenges, requiring continuous strategy adaptation (Lady, 2024). Targeted support and training can help overcome these obstacles, enabling businesses to fully leverage social media benefits (Umami and Darma, 2021). Research highlights the importance of effective communication and relationship-building on social media platforms (Cheung et al., 2020). Leveraging these platforms for marketing communication can drive business growth (Koay et al., 2020). Consistency in strategy and the use of AI technologies for monitoring and personalizing content are crucial for maintaining a strong online presence (Rani and Sundaram, 2022). Engaging content strategies significantly influence consumer buying decisions (Lady, 2024). Social media analysis can increase product sales and enhance brand performance and loyalty (Alraja et al., 2020). By addressing these challenges with targeted support and training, small businesses can enhance their online presence, engage effectively with their audience, and drive business performance through strategic social media marketing initiatives.

The prominence of Facebook and Instagram in the social media marketing landscape underscores their significance. Businesses utilize these platforms to share various content types, such as product photos, promotional posts, and customer testimonials, reflecting a multifaceted approach to engaging audiences Shen (2023). It is essential for businesses to understand the distinct dynamics and audience preferences of each platform to tailor their content effectively and enhance engagement (Wibowo et al., 2020). Research by Shen (2023) indicates that utilizing different blog content for brands on social media platforms can improve brand engagement with customers. This highlights the importance of aligning content strategies with platform-specific features to boost audience interaction and brand visibility. Furthermore, the study by Wibowo et al. (2020) emphasizes the enduring impact of social media as a marketing tool on business performance, showcasing the potential for businesses to achieve long-term success through effective social media strategies. Businesses can

enhance their social media marketing endeavors by acknowledging the unique strengths of platforms like Facebook and Instagram and adjusting their content strategies accordingly. By capitalizing on the diverse capabilities of these platforms and comprehending audience preferences, businesses can elevate engagement, foster brand awareness, and drive positive outcomes in their marketing initiatives.

The variation in engagement levels across different content types highlights the significance of interactive content in boosting engagement. Businesses that integrate polls, contests, and live videos into their social media strategies often experience higher engagement rates, indicating these formats are more appealing to audiences. This can help businesses choose content types that encourage interaction and cultivate a devoted customer base. Shahbaznezhad et al. (2021) found that the format and platform of social media content significantly influence user engagement, with Facebook linked to socially interactive content. Buzeta et al. (2020) emphasize the impact of various platforms on consumers' online brand-related activities, highlighting the importance of understanding specific motivations to improve brand outcomes. By integrating interactive content formats, businesses can elevate engagement levels and establish a strong rapport with their audience.

The perceived impact of social media marketing on business outcomes, with an average score of 4.3, suggests that businesses find these efforts highly beneficial. The significant percentages of respondents reporting increases in brand awareness, customer engagement, and sales directly attributed to social media activities affirm the effectiveness of these strategies in driving business growth (Sharabati et al., 2022). This perception aligns with existing literature on the advantages of social media marketing for small businesses. In a study by (Lady, 2024), the correlation between social media adoption and business outcomes is highlighted, emphasizing the positive impact of social media on driving engagement and business success. Additionally, research by Zheng and Ibrahim (2024) underscores the importance of visual content in motivating users to engage with social media posts. Sharabati et al. (2022) discuss how self-expression through social media can enhance brand engagement and generate long-term value for businesses. The positive perception of social media marketing's impact on business outcomes, supported by increased brand awareness, customer engagement, and sales, underscores the value of these strategies in driving business growth and success.

The challenges reported by respondents, including limited financial resources, lack of technical skills, and difficulty in measuring ROI, highlight the need for support to enhance social media marketing capabilities (Pour et al., 2021). These obstacles hinder effective utilization of social media strategies, limiting potential benefits for small businesses. Providing access to training, resources, and tools can empower businesses to overcome these challenges and optimize their efforts. Jafari (2023) emphasizes the importance of content sharing practices in promoting brand awareness. Mitrović et al. (2020) showcase graphic design tools for creating engaging content. Rani and Sundaram (2022) demonstrate the potential of AI in enhancing collaborative social media marketing



strategies. Krisnanto and Yulian (2020) highlight the impact of brand awareness on customer loyalty through interaction and communication. Shrestha (2023) explores the influence of social media on consumer buying behavior. Addressing these financial and technical challenges through targeted support and training can help small businesses maximize the benefits of their social media marketing efforts.

The actions made by some companies, such as investing in online courses, hiring consultants, and using software tools, demonstrate a strong commitment to improving the efficiency of social media marketing. These initiatives reflect an understanding that learning is a continuous process in the ever-evolving social media landscape. Therefore, increasing the number of companies with similar experiences can contribute to enhancing the overall impact of social media marketing. Rietveld et al. (2020) emphasize the role of message appeals in customer engagement on Instagram, highlighting the importance of emotional and informative content for engagement behavior. Krisprimandoyo (2024) explores social media engagement, customer reviews, and brand perception, focusing on user behaviors and tweet attributes that drive engagement on platforms like Twitter. Tan (2024) explains how the use of UGC (User-Generated Content) can effectively improve customer engagement on e-commerce platforms, making it a valuable strategy for businesses. The following strategies show that the businesses are being proactive in improving the effectiveness of their social media marketing: The businesses invest in the continuous learning process, they look for outside help, and they use software tools. In this way, enterprises are able to overcome the difficulties of the digital environment and achieve better results in the sphere of social media.

The study's findings demonstrate that social media marketing is a highly effective tool for small businesses in San Isidro, Nueva Ecija. Active engagement through social media leads to increased brand awareness, customer loyalty, and sales revenue. Despite challenges such as limited resources and technical skills, small businesses can optimize their social media strategies by focusing on regular postings and interactive content. These findings highlight the potential of social media marketing to drive sustainable growth for small businesses in rural areas, providing valuable insights for local business owners and policymakers. By addressing the identified challenges and leveraging the benefits of social media marketing, small businesses can achieve significant improvements in their marketing outcomes and overall business performance.

An action plan to enhance social media marketing capabilities for small businesses in San Isidro, Nueva Ecija, includes several key initiatives. Training programs aim to improve technical skills through workshops, webinars, expert partnerships, and online courses. Financial support is provided through grants, low-interest loans, and microfinance schemes to alleviate financial constraints. Resource provision includes access to graphic design and social media management software, discounted subscriptions, and a shared resource center. ROI measurement tools focus on developing templates and guides for tracking ROI, implementing analytics software, and providing training on these tools. Continuous learning is promoted through peer-to-peer mentoring,

updated educational content, and annual conferences. Technical support offers on-demand assistance via a helpline, consulting sessions, and a FAQ guide. Implementing these initiatives will help small businesses overcome challenges, effectively leverage social media marketing, and improve overall business performance.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study demonstrates the significant effectiveness of social media marketing for small businesses in San Isidro, Nueva Ecija, highlighting its role in increasing brand awareness, customer engagement, and sales. Despite facing challenges such as limited financial resources, technical skills, and difficulties in measuring ROI, small businesses have shown adaptability and innovation in their social media strategies. The proposed action plan includes key initiatives such as training programs, financial support, resource provision, ROI measurement tools, continuous learning, and technical support. By implementing these measures, small businesses can overcome obstacles, optimize their social media marketing efforts, and achieve sustainable growth.

For policymakers, it is recommended to provide specific assistance and tools to improve digital marketing literacy among SMEs, promote continuous learning, and implement innovative social media strategies. These efforts will help small businesses fully harness the power of social media marketing, thereby enhancing both marketing performance and overall business performance. The limitation of this study is that it relies on participant responses, meaning some aspects of social media marketing in other settings may not have been captured. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies, specific social media platforms and content, new technologies, external factors, and a variety of rural and urban locations to gain a better understanding of the effectiveness of social media marketing.

## 6. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The Researchers extend their gratitude to the small business owners in San Isidro, Nueva Ecija, for their participation and insights. Special thanks to our academic advisors and the research institution for their support and guidance throughout this study.

## 7. ETHICAL APPROVAL

This study adhered to the ethical guidelines of the Ethics and Research Committee of Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology, which granted approval. All ethical considerations were addressed to protect participants' rights and welfare. Participation was voluntary, with informed consent obtained after explaining the study's purpose, methodology, risks, and benefits. Anonymity and confidentiality were assured, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without repercussions. Data was securely stored and accessible only to the research team, ensuring participant privacy and the integrity



of the research process.

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